

SIAMS Readiness Review

School:	The Vine Inter-Church Primary (CofE/Methodist)
Date of visit:	29 September 2022
Headteacher:	Lee Faris
Chair of Governors:	Mr Dan Rainbow
Subject leader for RE:	Kirsty Gray
Chaplain:	Rev Bill Miller
Address:	Upper Cambourne Cambourne Cambridgeshire CB23 6DY
Reviewer	Dr Simon Hughes

Executive Summary

Key outcome	How effective is the school’s distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?
	<p>Aspects where evidence of effectiveness was found</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Vine is a self-consciously Christian school, even the school hall is laid out in the style of a Christian place of worship with a focus table and an impressive mirror in the form of a cross. It is the first room visitors come across upon arrival and sets the scene for the rest of the building. • Leaders are supported in their work by ambitious, enthusiastic and professionally skilled governors. They recognise the limits of their knowledge and expertise in the schools sector but make use of every available opportunity to be trained. • Leaders benefit from the support provided by MAST (Methodist Academies and Schools Trust); Governors benefit from Diocese of Ely training and support from Cambridgeshire Local Authority governor services. • Collectively leaders and governors have put in place a curriculum that enables pupils and adults to flourish and, for those who wish, to grow in faith. • Leaders’ Christian vision, set out in their clear statements, underpins each aspect of work in the school. It frames relationships with parents and other stakeholders and means that pupils know they are loved. They are cared for well. • The ethos of love and care means that pupils behave extremely well and take care of each other. The culture of the school is pleasing and inspiring. Staff appear to be very pleased to work at The Vine; parents are delighted their children attend: ‘ Thank you for creating such a caring environment for children inside the school and teaching them important human values. <p>Aspects where evidence suggests it would be even better if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some minor improvements were made to the school’s ‘shop window’ • further training was provided for staff on the specificity of some aspects of the Religious Education Curriculum.

Next steps towards ‘readiness’.

Leaders and the governors should consider:

- a modest (in terms of time) review of the school’s web presence, seeking to ensure that everything they would want inspectors to see is clearly visible and thoroughly proof read.

Sources of evidence

Prior to the visit the following sources were consulted:

- The school's website
- The school's self-evaluation document
- The Religious Education Policy
- The Collective Worship Policy.

On the day of the visit evidence was collected from:

- Meetings with senior leaders and the leadership team for Religious Education
- Observation of class acts of Collective Worship
- A tour of the school, including the extensive outside spaces
- Observations of teaching in Year 5, Year 6, Year 2 and Reception.
- Meetings with representatives of the governing body and the clergy team.

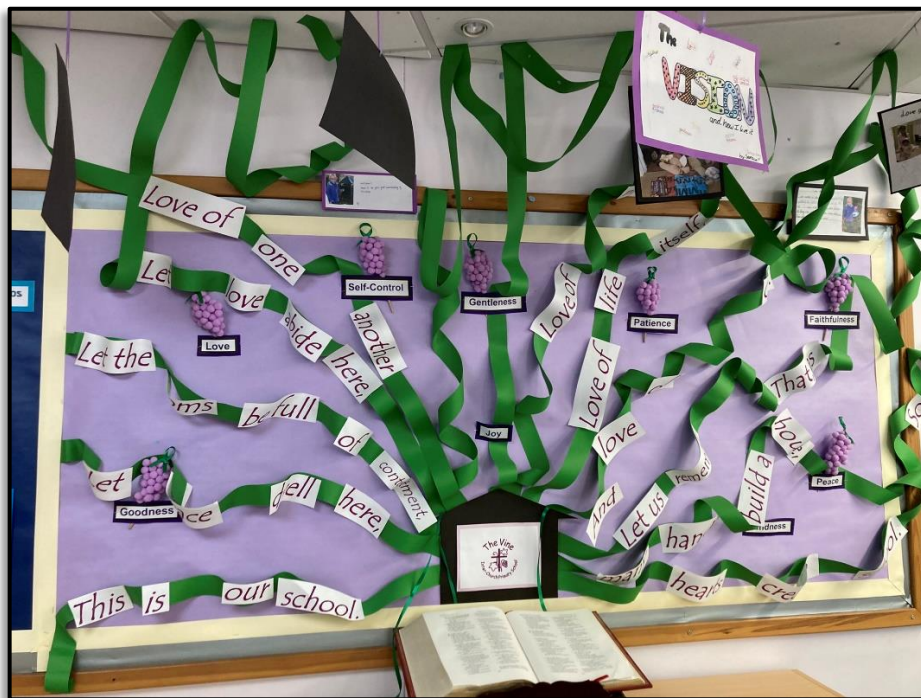


Figure 1: The Vine at The Vine

<p>Strand 1</p>	<p>Vision and Leadership</p>
	<p>Aspects where evidence of effectiveness was found</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders have a rare opportunity to conduct a school on sound ecumenical grounds. The Vine demonstrates that it is possible for Christians to work together effectively and that there is more that binds than separates Christians from different denominations. • While this school is in the joint trusteeship of the Church of England and the Methodist Church, it is admirably supported by the minister at the local Church building, himself a Baptist, where four denominations co-exist (Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists and members of the United Reformed Church). Incidentally the building privileges hiring of bookings so that Roman Catholics can attend Mass close to their home. • This spirit of co-operation is embodied in The Vine where a lovely atmosphere pervades all that it does. There is a true spirit of generosity and charity permeating the classrooms and corridors, as well as the outside spaces. The culture is set clearly by leaders who are confident about what they are doing and why. • Pupils race into school once the gate is opened, indicating their obvious anticipation of a good day ahead! This is because leaders ensure that one part of the school’s vision statement ‘let love abide here’ runs like lettering in a stick of rock through everything that it does. • The school’s vision statement is heavily endowed with Christian overtones, at the centre of which is the Great Commission ‘Go and make followers of all the nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to do all the things I have told you’ Mt 28:16-20. • The headteacher demonstrates a very clear commitment to distributed leadership, trusting his senior leaders with significant parts of the remit. They respond in kind exhibiting self-assured emergent leadership from their appointed managerial posts. The open communication between the team leads to good decision-making which always has at its heart the best interests of the pupils. • Leaders’ self-confidence enables them to involve the staff in developing the vision and values of the school so that they are ‘owned’ by everyone. • The school’s physical location also evinces its Christian foundations. For example, leaders are working on the development of a forest school area as extension of the existing outdoor classroom. This will enable pupils to further their understanding of the natural world and to appreciate the beauty of creation. They have also created a large display to help pupils understand the sequence in the biblical account of Creation around the inner courtyard [pupils study the Creation in Year 2 so this is a pertinent and powerful visual aid]. Fruit trees form a mini orchard to the front of the school so that pupils’ experience is grounded in nature and the planet as a living organism. • Leaders invest in keeping the site a rich resource for pupil learning, employing a former teacher as a site manager. This is visionary and imaginative. <p>Aspects where evidence suggests it would be even better if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliberately left blank.

<p>Strand 2</p>	<p>Wisdom, Knowledge, and Skills</p>
	<p>Aspects where evidence of effectiveness was found:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are committed to regular and robust training and development. Indeed, on the day of the visit, all the teaching assistants were being given a ‘snapshot’ on mathematics. The subject leader has completed a recent snapshot on the Bahai faith. Although this is not a taught part of the Religious Education curriculum, it is a sign of a continuing ambition for staff to continuously improve themselves. • Of direct relevance to their work in Religious Education, some training was provided on using biblical references as some, new to teaching in a Church foundation school, were unfamiliar with the practice and its associated techniques. • Leaders comment that they have found this method of ‘drip-feeding’ subject knowledge useful, given the number of staff they have at different stages of their professional development. It is possible to see that this is already a dynamic professional learning hub as leaders are currently supporting: teaching assistant apprentices, student teachers, teachers on school-centred initial teacher training programmes, early career teachers and a few qualified staff who are new to the school. • The headteacher models professional learning himself by formal study at higher degree level and keeping up to speed with developments in education. This professional reflexivity feeds into the school’s self-evaluation document (SEF) so that a bold decision has been taken to set it out without following the strands of the SIAMS framework. • The SEF provides a lot of detail about the performance of pupils in core subjects. While this is interesting it uses up a lot of valuable space in the document when some of the subject matter is much more appropriate to section 5 or section 8 inspection activity. We engaged in a professional debate about whether the clause in Strand 2 of the Handbook justifies the approach: ‘How effective is the school at meeting the learning needs of all pupils through the curriculum?’ Leaders must now make their own informed judgement about this or seek further guidance as they prepare the next iteration of the SEF. • For the record, though, staff are to be commended for enabling pupils to achieve outcomes that will prepare them well for the next stages of their education and on into a life of study and/or work. • Moreover, it is unarguable that leaders are adept at identifying and seeking to meet the needs of all pupils at the school. There is a wide array of provision to support those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. • Leaders also support those who speak English as an Additional Language (they calculate that there are 47 languages spoken in the school). Wall displays signal leaders’ effective work in this area so that all are ‘welcome’ in their own language. Indeed many classrooms are adorned with a map of the globe indicating each pupils’ country of origin. <p>Aspects where evidence suggests it would be even better if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the SEF made explicit its cross references to the Strands of the SIAMS handbook.

Strand 3	Character Development: Hope, Aspiration, and Courageous Advocacy
	<p>Aspects where evidence of effectiveness was found:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders provide a wide range of services to enable pupils to build resilience. Many pupils arrive at school with considerable emotional baggage. • Leaders have created an imaginative ‘space’ in the grounds of the school which acts as a form of youth hub. As well as teaching some PE, a part-time professional uses the space to support those with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) issues. This helps to keep pupils in school where they can be cared for fully. • In keeping with a careful reading of the SIAMS’ framework leaders ensure that each class has a courageous advocate as a focus and model; historical characters such as biblical Simeon, Anne Frank and Alan Turing. <p>Aspects where evidence suggests it would be even better if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliberately left blank.

Strand 4	Community and Living Well Together
	<p>Aspects where evidence of effectiveness was found:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The very foundation of this school as a joint Anglican-Methodist institution exemplifies the commitment to community co-operation and cohesion. • As such, the school is a school of choice for many in the town who are seeking a Christian education. ‘Some folk walk past the school that is right opposite the Church so that their children can come here’. • Leaders make good use of the opportunities afforded by this unique position by, for example, mounting a display on Easter at the local Morrison’s. This is school-centred evangelisation at the highest level. • Leaders also ensure that charitable works are directed towards local causes. Notably, the harvest festival offerings were being collected to support Jimmy’s Night Shelter in Cambridge. • As indicated elsewhere, the whole community talks about ‘pro-social’ behaviour and even the rewards system leads to a class getting some funds to support charities of the classes’ choosing. • The school community is ably supported by governors who come from the wider community. Even though it is a relatively young school it is very much the pride of the local area and community leaders, such as the minister, are both welcome and willing to support its work. <p>Aspects where evidence suggests it would be even better if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliberately left blank.

Strand 5	<p>Dignity and Respect</p> <p>Aspects where evidence of effectiveness was found:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults respect pupils in this school. • Similarly pupils respect adults and each other. • This stems from the overt Christian exemplars of appropriate and courteous behaviours towards one another. • Leaders have in place a policy of Relationships and Sex Education (RSE), though it was not obvious on the website at the time of the pre-visit analysis. It would be helpful if it were as a protection for staff and governors in the present climate. In discussion, however, it became clear that the RSE Policy allows for parents to exercise their right to withdraw their children. Although there have been a tiny number of parents wishing to explore this right, the sensitive handling of their queries rightly resulted in no pupils actually being withdrawn. This is commendable. • Equally, there is much retrospective evidence of appropriate Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education in place, which must be based on a coherent policy. Such a policy was not easily accessible prior to the visit. But what was observed across the school was pupils learning to take care of themselves and the environment; learning to respect the individual differences between themselves and each other and, in very touching ways, responding kindly to those who are facing particular challenges. • Leaders work closely with a number of pupils who face significant challenges. They treat each one with the dignity they are entitled to. This includes, for example, working effectively with new arrivals to the school who have very little English, or the families who have not yet come to terms with the reality of their child’s special educational needs and/or disabilities. They exemplify in their actions the teaching of Jesus: ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these’ (Lk18:16). • The Vine participates in the Ely Young Leaders Programme which is an initiative of the Archbishop of York. As a direct consequence of the contribution of a Muslim pupil from the school, the project will seek to become more inclusive in future. This is excellent. <p>Aspects where evidence suggests it would be even better if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliberately left blank.
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Strand 6	The impact of collective worship
	<p>Aspects where evidence of effectiveness was found</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders have put in place a Collective Worship Policy that is based on a sensible approach to promoting invitation and inclusion. The policy provides for the right of withdrawal for parents wishing to exercise this right. The policy also makes clear the expectations of staff with regard to Collective Worship. This is important because each class is expected to participate in Worship led by the pupils at least once a week. In the week of the visit it was the turn of Year 4 to prepare and lead a pre-recorded act of worship. • Leaders ensure that staff are confident in facilitating worship by providing a rich array of materials and a comprehensive list of biblical readings to support each theme. This is impressive. This is all very deliberate and has been thought through well. • On the day of the visit, in keeping with the theme of the week, pupils were engaged in a Harvest act of Collective Worship. Alongside an appropriate selection of readings, pupils were able to worship by singing together the <i>Harvest Samba</i>. They did so with gusto. This is clear evidence of custom and practice in school liturgy. • Whole school worship is supported by helpful prayer spaces in each classroom. Pupils design and decorate these spaces in work that they describe again as ‘pro-social’. • Some pupils are afforded the status of prayer space monitors. They check regularly that the spaces are refreshed and contain appropriate stimuli and objects that pay tribute to the focus. It was pleasing to see, as a reflection of the religious diversity in the school, that one of the prayer spaces contained a copy of the Qur’ān exhibited with due attention paid to the rules relating to its handling. • Moved by their observations of war in Eastern Europe some pupils in Year 6 designed and created a prayer space for Ukrainian families. Other pupils created a prayer space in memorial of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. • The large image of a Vine (shown at the top of this document) in the entrance hall creates a powerful representation of the encircling nature of a vine’s branches and the reach of Jesus who is the metaphorical Vine. • Strikingly, the school hall resembles a Christian Church and is used as such for whole-school collective worship. The cross-shaped mirror is a dramatic symbol of the Christian foundations of the school and serves to remind pupils daily of the significance of Jesus. <p>Aspects where evidence suggests it would be even better if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliberately left blank.

Strand 7	The impact of Religious Education
	<p>Aspects where evidence of effectiveness was found:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders have in place a clear policy for Religious Education which fits within an appropriate schedule of review by the governors. It was marked up for renewal in September 2022. The subject leader indicated that the necessary amendments had been made and that it was awaiting sign off by the governors at an upcoming meeting. This is an example of the highly effective governance at the school and its commensurate impact on the professionalism of staff. High expectations are met with high levels of performance. • The Religious Education Policy allows for parents to exercise their right to withdraw their children. • The school’s curriculum for Religious Education is based on the Cambridgeshire Agreed Syllabus which means much of the long term, and some medium term planning, is already in place, allowing the subject leader to focus on methodology and pedagogy. • The subject leader has provided advice and guidance on Religious Education to other schools in the Diocese as much of her work meets the threshold for being ‘exemplary’. The subject leader is well supported by staff in the school who commit to teaching Religious Education equally as well as they commit to other subjects. • It is likely that a forensic analysis of all that leaders intend for the pupils would actually disclose a far greater percentage of curriculum time afforded for the teaching of Religious Education. Leaders are keen to explore this. • As well as monitoring by the school’s leaders, Religious Education at the school is regularly reviewed by representatives of the Diocese and from the Methodist Circuit. The headteacher is currently beginning to work as an Ely Diocese Regional Advisor (EDRA) and will thus be in a position to self-critically evaluate even further provision and outcomes at The Vine. • As a result of this high level of leadership expertise, the teaching of Religious Education is supported admirably with a secure documentary framework including an overarching curriculum map. • Teaching in lessons is purposeful and engaging, even with the youngest pupils. Teachers use a wide array of strategies to engage pupils in a wide range of topics. For example, pupils in Year 5 were studying Holy Week as gap analysis activity had shown some weaknesses in pupils’ knowledge. In Year 6 pupils were examining the Big Bang theory of the origins of the universe exemplifying the spirality of the curriculum since Year 2 were looking at the biblical story of the Creation. A brief drop-in to one Year 3 class revealed some further work on Hindu creation stories. • The subject leader has developed an effective system for recording, tracking and monitoring pupils’ progress in the subject. Data from this process is fed into the school’s overarching tacking system. As a result, leaders are suitably informed of how well each pupil is progressing over time. • Highlights from the tracking system are captured in Big Books. This amounts to the school’s treasure and provides an easily accessible snapshot of the effectiveness of Religious Education at The Vine. <p>Aspects where evidence suggests it would be even better if:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• all staff operated consistently at the high level of subject knowledge accuracy. This is essential for not reinforcing misconceptions, especially given the high proportion of EAL pupils, who may miss the specificity and nuance of some technical theological concepts.
Strand 7c	<p>This is applies to VA schools only</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• As a result of the well-intentioned work cited above, the vast majority of pupils acquire good subject knowledge over time and deepen their understanding of aspects of the beliefs and practices of the principal religions of the United Kingdom. Consequently they are well-prepared for the next stages of their education.